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ABSTRACT

The central role of teachers' interpretive assessments in guiding the growth of young writers is explored. Theories of reader response and literary criticism have been used to design a framework that integrates what is read with what is written. The current context of writing assessment is explored, and some of the other authors' efforts to develop methods for the assessment of narrative are described. The program "Writing What You Read" emphasizes the analytic and integrated nature of narrative reading and narrative assessment. By learning to critique the craft of published authors, teachers and their students are provided with points of access into the world of creative narrative writing. A developmental perspective is offered in the genre-specific nature of story development and the development of children's writing. To aid teachers, a narrative feedback form to support student-teacher conferences and a narrative rubric to help teacherr evaluate students' present understandings and future possibilities were developed. The feedback form allows for comment in the areas of theme, character, setting, plot, and communication, as well as convention and writing process. The rubric is a classroom measure with five evaluative scales for student writing. Some examples of student writing and the application of teacher evaluation are given. Three figures illustrate the discussion. (Contains 68 references.) (SLD)

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CSE Technical Report 358

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WRITING WHAT YOU READ: ASSESSMENT AS A LEARNING EVENT[1]

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In the current vision of language arts curriculum and instruction, there are many positive images of classroom work—child-centered curriculum, based in meaningful activity, with learning as a "transactive, dialogic negotiation" (Goodman, Bird, & Goodman, 1990). In such classrooms, a child's "errors" are not interpreted in a negative light, but rather as signposts to understand the child's logic and meaning-making. Interpretations of children's meanings are central to teachers' roles as supportive guides, central to the process of guiding children's communicative efforts.

The focus of our paper is on the central role of teachers' interpretative assessments in guiding the growth of young writers (Hiebert, 1991). Supported by teachers' sound understandings of writing development and knowledge of literacy, a teacher's assessments of a child's compositions reveal the response of at least one person—a person with potentially valuable insights by virtue of her expertise. The teacher serves as reader and responder, providing commendations and recommendations for further growth. But the teacher is not the only expert. Today's classrooms are moving toward distributed expertise (Wertsch, 1991), encouraging children to be creators as well as critics of their own work and that of others.

> [A]ssessment is—or could be—an occasion when a participant learns something about the nature of assessment itself. It is a moment when she suddenly, painfully, or with delight, sees her work as someone else might, either because she can no

[1] Our thanks to the ACOT teachers and students for their collaboration, to Andrea Whittaker for her central contribution to the early phases of this work, to Edys Quellmalz for her technical assistance with rubric design, and to Eva Baker and Joan Herman for assessment expertise. Joan Herman, Freddie Hiebert, Lorrie Shepard, and Kenny Wolf responded in helpful ways to earlier drafts of this paper.

> longer dodge their commentary, or because, she, herself, steps outside and becomes an onlooker. . . . The frontier in assessment . . . has to do with seizing that . . . unrecognized aspect of assessment . . . an occasion for learning. (Wolf, in press)

In this scenario, assessment dialogues are learning events that support reflection, analysis, and growth.

In this paper, we suggest that writing "assessment" should be understood as an "analytic response to text." In designing a framework that integrates what we read with what we write—and thus what we assess with what we teach—we have drawn on theories of reader response and literary criticism (e.g. Rosen, 1985; Rosenblatt, 1978), writing development (Dyson, 1989; in press), and the social construction of meaning (Heath, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978). In the following sections, we explore the current context of writing assessment and then move to the context of our own efforts to develop methods for the assessment of narrative. Representing a collaboration of teachers and researchers, our work suggests that, through literary analysis, teachers and their young writers can develop abilities to construct the kinds of substantive assessments of texts—whether a published author's, their own, or a peer's—that can inform and guide their own growth in narrative criticism and composition.

Writing Assessment: The Current Context

Much of the recent debate surrounding writing assessment has addressed the appropriateness and meaningfulness of methods used for large-scale testing. While this paper is concerned with classroom assessment, the issues that emerge in large-scale assessment are helpful in clarifying differences among interpretations of what should be assessed, how it should be assessed, and the usefulness of assessments to teachers and students.

Standardized direct assessments of children's writing offer writers a limited time block and a topic on which to write. Although there are many criticisms—particularly about the length of time given to accomplish the writing, the artificiality of the assignments, and the limitations in genres assessed—direct writing assessment represents the importance of evaluating authentic literacies and not isolated skills (Freedman, 1991). Responses to criticisms have prompted a move toward further authenticity—tasks and task

contexts that may incorporate shared readings of common background texts, collaborative planning, and opportunities for revision. Portfolio assessment in particular represents the growing commitment to bridge the worlds of public accountability and private classroom, of policymaker and child.

Nevertheless, the usefulness of large-scale assessment results remains in question. It is unlikely that teachers can make use of single holistic or primary trait scores to guide students' growth. This is not to say that the *process* of producing those scores is without value; studies of the scoring process have demonstrated benefits for teachers who make the judgments (Huot, 1991). Moderation sessions provide a context for analyzing student work, achieving consensus on the standards for competent performance, and on the criteria for assessing levels of attainment toward those standards. Still, holistic rubrics generally fail to embody the far more complex understandings articulated by teachers in moderation sessions. Analytic scales (e.g., separate scales for such dimensions as Organization, Content, Style, Voice, and Mechanics) have greater instructional potential, but only if the dimensions reflect consensus on genre elements. There is a need for judgments that "chart . . . the course between uniformity of judgment on the one hand and representation of complexity and diversity on the other hand" (Wolf, Bixby, Glenn, & Gardner, 1991). That need is particularly crucial for classroom teachers who are concerned not only with students' present work, but with their future growth.

The emerging move toward portfolio assessment has potential to provide an effective match between what children can accomplish in their writing and how teachers assess their work (Camp, 1990, 1992; Freedman, 1991; Hiebert & Calfee, 1992; Valencia & Calfee, in press; Wolf, 1989). But placing children's writing in folders hardly constitutes an assessment system (Gearhart, Herman, Baker, & Whittaker, 1992; Gearhart, Herman, Baker, Wolf, & Whittaker, 1992; Gearhart, Herman, Wolf, & Baker, 1992; Gearhart, Wolf, Herman, Whittaker, & Baker, 1992; Wolf, 1989). The design of portfolio assessment methods must begin with a clear statement of purpose. For large-scale assessment, that purpose will establish the grounding for constructing criteria for portfolio inclusions and for scoring the resulting collections (Herman, Aschbacher, & Winters, 1992). For classroom assessment, that

purpose sets in motion the evolution of classroom practices that support assessment dialogues as essential "occasions for learning" (Wolf, in press). Our goal has been the design of portfolio practices that support teachers' and students' growth in critical analysis.

Our Project

Our work stems from a long-term collaboration between the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) and the teachers of one elementary school to develop methods of portfolio assessment (Baker, Gearhart, Herman, Tierney, & Whittaker, 1991). While the project is currently focusing on classroom practice and the development of assessments that are informative to teachers and students, we are investigating the potential of our assessments for use at the school and district levels. In prior reports, we documented some of the difficulties of implementing portfolio assessments and teachers' limited evaluations in the absence of a supportive curriculum and assessment framework (Gearhart, Herman, Wolf, & Baker, 1992; Gearhart, Wolf, Herman, Whittaker, & Baker, 1992). When working with large, genre-mixed collections of writing, teachers' assessments were superficial at best. In a context of "apples and oranges," teachers focused more on convention than communication, organization rather than originality, and generalizations rather than genre-appropriate comments. Dyson and Freedman (1991) suggest that "as teachers work together to analyze portf os, they may develop analytic tools that could prove useful in their teaching" (p. 759). Teachers "may," but how can we ensure that they will?

In an effort to answer this question, we worked to design portfolio assessments that integrated and supported links among curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Our choice was to focus on analytic criticism, treating text as a problem to be solved through interpretive dialogue. We began our work with the genres of narrative, believing that narrative as a "primary act of mind" (Hardy, 1978) was more familiar and accessible to the teachers as well as their students. Because narrative held a central place in the elementary curriculum across grades K-6 (unlike exposition, which primary teachers often avoid), it permitted us to explore possibilities for a schoolwide framework for writing curriculum and assessment.

The remainder of our paper focuses on the substance of our work. We begin with the rationale for our program, *Writing What You Read*, by emphasizing the analytic and integrated nature of narrative reading and narrative assessment. We then outline the core concepts of our framework, the components of narrative, and show how they are influenced by subgenre. Next we apply our framework to the design of methods for classroom assessment: a narrative feedback form for teacher-student conferences, and a narrative rubric that supports dialogic assessments of students' writing. We conclude with an outline of our "next steps" for project development and some reflection on the implications of our work for large-scale writing assessment.

Writing What You Read

Many elementary teachers are adept at connecting children, text, and topic but often stop short of analysis. They experience literature with their students without critiquing it; they assign narrative writing without analytically responding to their students' narratives. Glenda Sloan (1991) suggests:

> *Criticism* used in relation to elementary school literary study is considered by some as too big a word. It conjures up pictures of scholars in ivory towers writing articles for learned journals. But criticism as here defined and described is not study that goes beyond the capabilities of younger students . . . Growth in criticism is based on knowledge. . . . Good teachers of literature help children to make sense out of each literary experience and to go on to discover patterns and make significant connections among all of their literary experiences. (pp. 39-40)

The importance of criticism and connections may be underemphasized in the current trend toward process writing (e.g., Atwell, 1987; Graves, 1983). Young authors are encouraged to write about life experiences and the life of their individual imaginations and then analyze the effectiveness of their written interpretations. *"Write what you know"* is the advice often given to novice writers, encouraging them to take what they *know about life* and put it on paper. Yet, Annie Dillard and other professional writers, including numerous children's authors, seem to suggest alternative advice: *"Write what you read,"* implying that writers are often inspired by what they *know about literature.*

> The writer studies literature, not the world. He lives in the world; he cannot miss it. If he has ever bought a hamburger, or taken a commercial airplane flight, he spares his readers a report of his experience. He is careful of what he reads, for that is what he will write. He is careful of what he learns, because that is what he will know. (Annie Dillard, *The Writing Life*, p. 68)

While *"Write what you know"* centers reflective powers on personal writing, *"Write what you read"* focuses analysis on the writing of others, its possible translation into personal authorship, and the role of critical response to one's own writing.

Interpreting Literature—The Components of Narrative

A succinct way of looking at the analysis of narrative is "actors and arenas for action," but a stripped down version does not a story make (Wolf & Heath, 1992). Writers craft characters by revealing their intentions, motivations, and affect through careful choices of style, tone, and point of view. They move characters through time, space, and situation through choices in genre, setting, and plot. And all of the elements work together to deliver particular themes.

Developing teachers' understandings of the components of narrative enables them to develop a common language, explore multiple texts, and design units that integrate the reading of literature with literary analysis and the writing of stories with interpretive assessment. The Components of Narrative chart (see Figure 1) was designed to provide teachers with a framework for each of the components of narrative. It is not comprehensive, for a key theme in our discussions was the enormous complexity of narrative. Yet, the chart served to condense and provide quick reference to hours of analytical talk about literary text. Of course, the separation of the components is an artificial choice, for the success of narrative depends on the *orchestration* of the components. A strong character will fall flat in an underdeveloped plot. Exquisite writing style will not carry a themeless set of episodes. Just as children must learn to orchestrate the processes of reading (Bussis, Chittenden, Amarel, & Klausner, 1985), young writers must explore how the components of narrative work in sync to develop a story.

Components of Narrative

	Genre	Theme	Character	Setting	Plot	Point of View	Style	Tone
Define the Terms	Genre is a classification system for organizing literature. It chunks stories with common elements together, although the categories are the subject of much debate.	Theme is the message of the story: an idea or comment about life. Theme illuminates the emotional content of the human condition.	The character is an actor in the story. The character can be a person, an animal, or an personified animal, object, or creature.	The basic elements of the setting are the place, time, and situation of the story.	The plot is a series of events which occur in a specific order. Not necessarily linear, the sequence represents the author's decisions for moving the story along.	Point of view is the view of the action the reader follows. It is often signalled by insights into thoughts and feelings.	Style is the use of language that reflects the spirit and personality of the writer through specific devices.	Tone is the manner of expression which conveys (through stylistic choices) the author's attitude toward his or her subject.
Develop a Common Language	Fantasy: Traditional Folk, Myth, Fable High Fantasy Science Fiction Reality: Problem Realism Historical Fiction Animal Realism	Universal Moral Implicit & Explicit Primary & Secondary	• Major/Minor • Protagonist/ Antagonist • Features: emotional, physical, intellectual • Character development, revelation	Time Place Situation Historical context Mood	• Story Graph • Episode Analysis: Problem Emotional Response Action Outcome • Flashback, Conflict, Suspense, Foreshadowing, Climax	First person (often the protagonist) Omniscient (spread across characters) Focused (usually on one character) Objective (actions reveal motivation)	Imagery Allusion Pun Hyperbole Figurative Language Personification Metaphor Sound Devices Alliteration Assonance Rhythm	Humor Warmth Condescension Didacticism
Explore the Text	• Identify elementary characteristics of particular genres. • Identify the genre you prefer and analyze why you like it. • Recognize that each genre tends to follow certain patterns. For example, fairy tales tend to have stock characters. Historic fiction relies heavily on the development of setting. Fables offer specific rules to live by. • Defend the author's choice of genre for delivering the theme of the story	• Identify the theme(s) in the text. • Describe the relationship of the theme to your life. • Compare/contrast other pieces of literature with similar theme(s). • Describe how your understanding of character, setting, & plot enhance your understanding of the theme(s). • Decide on the universality of the theme(s): Who is most affected by the theme's message?	• Identify the major and minor characters in a story. • Compare/ contrast the story characters to you or people you know. • Trace the development of a character through the story. • Trace the relationship between characters. • Analyze how the character is revealed through other characters' eyes.	• Explain the relationship of the setting to the story. • Relate the time, place, & situation to your own. • Explore the historical and cultural significance of the setting. • Describe how the setting reflects the character. • Compare/ contrast two or more settings in the story (e.g., How do the different settings affect the character?)	• Compare the plot to events that have occurred in your own life. • Identify an episode in terms of problem, emotional response, action, and outcome. • Outline several episodes relating the outcome of one episode to the problem of the next episode. • Explain the effect of the character's motivation on the plot or visa versa.	• Identify who's telling the story. • Analyze how the point of view reveals the character(s)' motivations, intentions, and feelings. • Justify the effectiveness of the point of view. • Criticize the author's choice of point of view. Would the story have been better served by an alternative?	• Describe the stylistic choices of the author and how they enhance the story. • Describe how the author's style reveals character, setting, and plot. • Compare/contrast stylistic choices within one author's work or between authors. • Reflect on the stylistic choices you will incorporate in your own speech and writing.	• Evaluate the tone(s) of the narrative voice. • Describe the influence of the narrative voice in relation to the major characters (e.g. sympathetic, condescending). • Analyze how the stylistic choices reflect the tone. • Compare/ contrast choices in tone within one author's work or between authors.

Wolf & Heisinger, 1988 • Revised by Wolf, 1992

Figure 1. Components of Narrative.

In our work, we similarly stressed how curricular possibilities, instructional techniques, and assessment tools must work together. By learning to critique the craft of published authors, we provided teachers and their children with points of access into the world of creative narrative writing. We also offered a developmental perspective in two substantive areas. First, we explored the *genre-specific nature of story development* (Lukens, 1990). For example, moving from a flat character to a fully developed dynamic personality is not a linear progression, but is tied to specific genres. In a fable we do not need to know any more about the lion and the mouse; their physical description, relationships to family and friends, and extended thought processes are not necessary to the story. But if we tried to write a piece of realistic fiction with such a limited character description, the story would fail. Second, we tried to focus on the *development of children's writing*. While we avoided casting a "template" that all children follow (Dyson, in press), we did try to provide some general understandings of how children grow in the writing process, offering continua of possibilities that were dependent on genre as well as on individual children's communicative abilities.

In the following sections, we will briefly outline each of the narrative components by offering a definition, suggesting key questions that teachers and children can explore, and providing illustrative examples from literature. The necessary orchestration across elements will build as we progress through the individual components. Our developmental focus here will be on differences in complexity that are based in genre, and how children can apply their understanding of these differences to their own writing.

Genre provides the frame for the story. It typecasts the tale, sending signals to prepare the reader for what lies ahead. The rounding of character, functions of setting, predictability of plot, and explicitness of theme are often determined by genre. While genre provides a classification system for organizing literature, the characteristics of certain "categories" are not set in stone. Indeed, the boundaries appear to be more porous than solid, as stories float between specific categories. In thinking about genre, there are several important questions that teachers and children can consider: What features and patterns of the story connect it to a specific genre? Can the story be cast in more than one category? Does the selected genre place certain constraints on the story?

Very general lines separate fantasy from reality. Realistic tales include those that center on personal and social problems, historical fiction, or tales that follow real animals in authentic situations. While historical fiction places great emphasis on the authenticity of setting, personal problem novels center on character development. For example, in Katherine Paterson's (1980) *Jacob Have I Loved*, young Sara Louise struggles to let her own identity shine out from the shadow cast by her twin, and her transformation from jealous and often rage-filled adolescent to a more reflective and accepting adult is key.

Fantasy opens the door to the rich world of make-believe. Although the problems may be as "real" as those portrayed in realistic fiction, the vehicle is as different as a royal coach from a solitary garden pumpkin. Subgenres of fantasy include folk and fairy tales, fables, myths, legends, science fiction, and high fantasy. Folk and fairy tales are well known for their predictability—stories painted in black and white. There is little gray in the world of the folk tale: characters are either good or evil, the setting a dark forest or a shining castle, the hero victorious and the nemesis defeated. Quite often the plot cycles around the number three: there are three brothers, three questions to be answered, and three nights to be spent spinning straw into gold.

Setting is critical in science fiction, which relies on a vision of the future. The miracles of technology and the world of scientific invention hold center stage, and characters use out-of-this-world vehicles to transport themselves through space and time. High fantasy has much in common with science fiction in that it creates another world, though it does not usually dwell in "another galaxy, far far away." Instead, the land of high fantasy is accessible in our own time, if we can only find the entrance. Falling down a rabbit's hole to Wonderland, stepping through a wardrobe into Narnia, or even standing defiantly in your own bedroom while the walls become the world all around creates a connection between the real world and the land of high fantasy.

Over the years literary critics have cast and recast the genre lines—what Fowler (1982) suggests are "not permanent classes but . . . families subject to change" (p. v). Some like to separate the modern tale from the folk and fairy tale, even though the two may follow similar patterns. Some believe that legends are more closely linked with the myth than the epic. Even a single story can cause confusion, as *A Wrinkle in Time* (L'Engle, 1962) is designated for both high fantasy and science fiction. Amidst the seemingly arbitrary

categories, however, there is an important notion for the teacher to communicate to students: Stories follow patterns, and an understanding of genre aids the student's ability to analyze stories and to write fresh tales which follow or veer from traditional patterns.

Theme is the heart of a story. Its meaning brings life to all parts of the tale, moving its message throughout the author's choice of character, setting, and plot. The connection of the theme to the reader's personal world is primary. Literary critics (Fish, 1980; Rosenblatt, 1978) suggest that each reader's interpretation of theme is highly individual—there is no single "correct" interpretation. Thus questions that children and teachers might ask are: What are the themes of this narrative and what relationship do they have to my life? Are the themes explicitly stated or implicit in the affect and actions of the characters? What connections do the themes of this tale have with other texts, experiences, and times?

Simple stories have straightforward and often didactic themes. For example, golden rules and aphorisms abound in the world of the fable, though this is appropriate to the genre. In fairy tales the themes are not so outspoken, but they still come through loud and clear: "intelligence is more important than strength" and "good conquers evil." Even though themes are often explicitly stated, more complex stories develop themes on an implicit level, through the affect and actions of their characters. In some stories, the themes are revealed on both planes. In *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1952), for example, the theme of the power of friendship to uplift one's life is directly stated, but it is the spider's constant attention and caring actions throughout the story that support the statement.

While simple stories suggest singular themes, more complex stories develop multiple ideas with both primary and secondary themes. The themes are layered and interconnected. In the story of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor, 1976) the overarching theme of the dynamic growth of young Cassie from naiveté to a mature understanding of her social world is supported by themes that emphasize the strength of a unified family, a strong love of the land, and the belief that persistence and dignity can effectively confront racism. Taylor's personal history adds another thematic layer, for in her own youth she found few books that described the lives of African Americans in authentic and positive prose. Motivated by a strong desire to tell the stories she

knew, Taylor's work centers on the strength of the African American family, and the power of the oral tale (Taylor, 1986). Children, too, are motivated to write their personal messages, and an analysis of theme offers them opportunities to explore how to communicate what Faulkner calls the "the human heart in conflict with itself."

Characters are animate beings with emotions, motivations, and intentions. They move in the time and space of a story, interacting with friends and foes, reflecting and taking action. At times, characters' thoughts are made explicit for the reader, but often we observe only the action and must infer the drive behind it. Questions that teachers and children can consider are: What are characters? Are they flat and unchanging or round and dynamic? How do characters move, think, and feel? Do they take on primary roles, or do they stand in the background? How do they change during the course of the story?

In the world of children's literature, characters may be human or not. The critical characteristic is that they be animate. Talking, thinking, and feeling animals abound—elephant kings, frogs and toads, runaway bunnies, and velveteen rabbits. Human characteristics are also given to plants, resulting in flowers that talk and trees that give friendship as well as apples. Animate characteristics are ascribed to objects as well. There are engines that climb over mountains, bringing toys to good girls and boys, and nutcrackers that come to life under the Christmas tree. Although one might assume that these animal and object characters are strictly found in primary texts, they move into intermediate levels as well. No one could doubt the evil intentions of the "It" in *A Wrinkle in Time* (L'Engle, 1962), the emotional distress of Hen Wen the oracular pig in *The Book of Three* (Alexander, 1964), and the motivation of a gentleman mouse to get off *Abel's Island* (Steig, 1976) and find his way home.

Because characters are "real," they experience emotion, they are motivated by life's circumstances, and they have purposes and intentions for accomplishing their goals whether it be reaching the top of a mountain ("I think I can!") or finding the Emerald City. The more sophisticated the character, the richer the description—the author rounds the character through physical as well as affective insights and details. Some characters remain unchanging, but others are dynamic—maturing through both the

action of the story and personal self-reflection. When two characters meet, their emotions, motivations, and intentions intertwine. Charlotte and Wilbur (White, 1952) present a classic example. They are motivated by the same desire to save Wilbur's life, but their emotions and intentions differ. Wilbur is a frightened child, who weeps and whines at the very mention of bacon. Charlotte, on the other hand is teacher and mother wrapped into one; she is calm, commanding, and consistent. While she devises an intricate and clever plan for tricking the humans, Wilbur is content to follow her directions, though he matures in the story from "some pig" to increasingly terrific, humble, and radiant. Through the security of constant support and friendship, he too learns to become a friend.

In the analysis of character, which is highly dependent on genre, children learn to make decisions about how much or how little to reveal of their protagonists and the characters who help or hinder them. Whether their characters are flat, round, static, or dynamic, the decisions children make support the themes they wish to communicate. They explore what kind of characters would get their message across, how much detail will be necessary to character description, and what point of view will best serve the revelation of character.

Setting includes the main features of time, place, and situation. But these features are not to be memorized and recited (Kansas, early 1900s, cyclone coming), but explored for the features and possible shifts in setting that reflect the general mood of the story and feelings of the characters. Questions teachers and children can explore include: Is the setting integral to the story or merely a backdrop, where the actual time and place are less important than the situation? How does the setting influence character mood or highlight the conflict? What is the function of shifts in setting?

The simplest settings often serve as a backdrop to the tale. In fables, for example, time and place are unimportant, for the boy who cried wolf could play his joke and receive his comeuppance almost anywhere at any time. Fairy tale settings are often stereotypical—"Once upon a time a long time ago"—but they retain their power just the same and provide beginning insights into the power of setting as symbol. The "forest" conjures up immediate images of trees that reach out to grab escaping heroines, with wolves and witches hiding therein. A "castle" needs little explanation—the

word itself sparks flickering candles that shed light on stone walls and sumptuous banquets attended by fairies, kings, and queens.

William Steig uses setting shifts to dramatize his many characters' predicaments. In *Abel's Island* (1976), Abel moves from the soft and spoiled life of a gentleman mouse to survival of the fittest on a lonely island. *Brave Irene* (1986) must leave the comfort of her mother's arms to battle the forces of nature. And *Solomon the Rusty Nail* (1985) leaves a life of ordinary rabbit-hood to become a nail hammered into the home of his jailer, Ambrose the cat. Although the time in these stories changes slowly, the shifts in place and situation are sudden and dramatic.

The setting shifts in *Bridge to Teribithia* (Paterson, 1977) are vital to the growing friendship of Jess and Leslie. In this story there are two main settings: the real one of home and school and the fantasy setting of Teribithia. Each differs in its general description, accessibility, inhabitants, and attraction. At home and school, Jess and Leslie have to face the day-to-day disappointments and challenges of races lost and getting back at rivals. But in Teribithia, they are in control. In more complex stories, such as Paterson's tale, setting has several functions—it sets the mood, reveals character and conflict, and serves as metaphor.

Plot is a sequence of events that moves the narrative from beginning to end. Quite often, the plot begins with a problem for a major character to solve, shows the difficulties of the problem in the middle of the story, and ends with a resolution of that problem. Plot reveals the movement of characters through time, space, and adversity. Questions teachers and children might explore include: How is the plot structured? How does the resolution of one event lead to the next episode? What clues does the author offer through foreshadowing? What is the use of time—does it move unerringly forward or are there flashbacks and dream sequences which bend or suspend time?

The simplest view of plot shows us that stories have beginnings, middles, and endings. In the beginning of *Cinderella*, a young girl is faced with a lifetime of drudgery and derision. Her fairy godmother arrives in the middle of the tale to offer her some sparkling alternatives. Ultimately, Cinderella discovers the old adage "if the shoe fits, wear it" and lives happily ever after with her prince. More sophisticated views of plot show the sequence of time in

related episodes. In the African story of *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (Steptoe, 1987), for example, the polarity of the actions and reactions of two sisters leads them into very different futures. The gentle and generous Nyasha meets and marries her king, while the bad-tempered Manyara is left to be a servant in her sister's household. Steptoe foreshadows the ultimate events through Manyara's dire, though misguided, predictions and the early appearance of the young king in a variety of symbolic guises.

Even more sophisticated are stories within stories, fitting neatly within each other like nesting boxes. Avi's (1988) haunting historical slave tale of *Something Upstairs* fits within a modern frame, as a young protagonist, Kenny, goes back and forth in time to help change the events of the past. But the complexity of the plot structure is revealed in the opening author's explanation as we learn that Kenny has come directly to Avi to tell his strange tale and that Avi eventually becomes his scribe. Thus, Avi's translation surrounds Kenny's modern day life which in turn surrounds his step back in time—a story within story within story. As children learn to create their own stories, they can lean on their analysis of literature to develop their own plots, to foreshadow events to come, and to link episodes toward conflict and final resolution.

Point of view. Through choices in point of view, the author decides what the reader will see and know. The view can be limited to the actions of characters or spread to their innermost thoughts and feelings. The view can offer insight into a single character or expand to everyone involved in the story. Point of view is the vision of the action that the reader will follow. Questions for teachers and children include: What is the chosen point of view? Does the choice provide us with adequate information? How does the point of view work to reveal character? Is the choice genre-appropriate?

In the objective point of view, the action speaks for itself. Although this choice is typical of drama and of young children's stories, it is rare in the world of children's literature. Exceptions seem to be restricted to realistic stories of animals like Burnford's (1961) story of *The Incredible Journey*, in which the realism is preserved by the author's inability to translate the thoughts of the feline and canine characters except through their actions. Much more common is the first person point of view, where the "I" is both character and narrator. In Jane Yolen's (1992) *Encounter*, the "discovery" of

America by Columbus is told from a San Salvadorean boy's point of view, in which he describes the Spaniards as strangers and serpents, and tells of his fears and futile attempts to warn his people of the coming danger. In the focused point of view, the actions and affect of a specific character or characters are laid out by the author who serves as narrator. For example, in *Annie and the Old One*, Miles (1971) shows us the Navaho world of life and death through Annie's eyes.

In more complex narratives, authors often provide an omniscient point of view, allowing us to hear and understand the thoughts and feelings of multiple characters. In Spinelli's (1990) *Maniac Magee*, for example, the focus is on the protagonist, but through the author's omniscient stance we are also given insights into the neighborhood's response to and relationship with Maniac. The connection between point of view and character is particularly strong, for the viewpoint focuses our attention, and often our sympathy and empathy, towards particular characters and away from others.

Style. Mark Twain wrote that "the difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter—'tis the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning." When we talk about word choice and pairing and piling words into prose, we are talking about style. Authors make stylistic choices to set the mood of their tales, reveal character, and give voice to their individual personalities. With regard to style, teachers and children could ask: What are some of the stylistic choices made by the author? How do specific choices expand or diminish the tale? Does the author make use of a wide variety of stylistic devices or limit the selection to only a few?

In simple stories, style is often more subdued. Fables lay out the scene in short, succinct sentences. Folk and fairy tales make generous use of simile—"hair as beautiful as beaten gold" or a stepmother so jealous that "rage grew like weeds in her heart." Tall tales are known for their hyperbole. As tales increase in complexity, the range of stylistic devices expands. Consonance (the clicking of common consonants) and assonance (elaborate extensions and elongations of vowels) help to establish rhythm as well as set mood. Metaphor is used extensively. For example, in Avi's ghost story *Something Upstairs*, the windows are shaped like coffins rather than simple rectangles. Mildred Taylor makes extensive use of a variety of stylistic devices in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*—rhythm, rhyme, and the overarching metaphor of the African

American spiritual from which the book's name is derived; the use of dialect to reflect the lives of Southerners both black and white; and personification as the school bus careening down the road takes on a life of its own. Through the analysis of style, with explicit attention to the craft of writing, children's original compositions can also come to life as they experiment with and expand upon the styles they see in literature.

Tone is an expression of the author's attitude toward his or her subject. Integrally linked to style, tone not only reveals character, but unveils the author's feelings toward those characters. Tone can be humorous, serious, affectionate, warm, cool, condescending, or even sarcastic. When teachers and children discuss tone they might ask: What is the tone used in this particular passage or about this particular character? What does the tone reveal about both the tale and the author? Is a similar tone maintained throughout the story or does it shift depending on the scene or the character?

Simple stories often have a uniform and straightforward tone. Fables call for consistency. Tall tales thrive on the humor of exaggeration. Known as *Zaubermärchen* in Germany and the *contes merveilleux* in France, folk and fairy tales are marked by an overarching tone of wonder (Zipes, 1991). Still, these oral wonder tales shift underlying tone for different characters—no one can doubt the author's alternating attitudes toward the wicked stepmother and the beautiful Snow White. As stories become increasingly complex, shifts in tone are common. In *Amazing Grace*, for example, Hoffman (1991) describes the imaginative play of the protagonist in affectionate and literary terms, but when Grace's classmates try to deny her the role of Peter Pan in a school play because she is both African American and a girl, the tone shifts, like a candle being snuffed out. In *Matilda*, Roald Dahl (1988) provides a dramatic shift in tone as he moves from character to character—innocent, intelligent Matilda, the caring Miss Honey, and the towering inferno of the headmistress Miss Trunchbull. Even the character names hint at the tone to come, and anyone familiar with Dahl's own experiences with boarding school knows his intense dislike of the many adults placed in charge of children's minds.

Assessment—Responding to Students' Narrative Writing

Mosenthal (1989) suggests that teachers placed in charge of children's learning often find themselves caught between an innovative literacy

curriculum (with goals of empowerment and critical thinking) and traditional literacy assessment (with standardized testing and report card grades). Caught in this dichotomy, even teachers who are knowledgeable about the components of narrative might continue to assign single score letter grades to students' compositions, leaving the reasoning behind the assessments unarticulated. Without the articulation, assessment cannot become a learning event (Wolf, in press). Our goal is to help teachers assess children's narrative writing in the same way that they critically respond to literature. Equipped with the "tools of the literary trade"—an understanding of genre influences, the technical vocabulary, etc.—teachers can reflect on students' writing and offer their students explicit guidance built upon the same methods for interpreting literature. We have developed two forms to aid teachers in their assessment endeavors: a *narrative feedback form* to support teacher-student conferences, and a *narrative rubric* to help teachers evaluate students' present understandings and future possibilities.

Feedback Form

Teachers' strategies for assessing students' writing often result in either generic and vague commentary, whether positive ("Neat story!") or negative ("More detail"), or a focus on conventions ("Remember your capitals!") rather than content. To encourage teachers to be more specific in their analysis and advice to children, we have developed a narrative feedback form (see Figure 2). The form is designed to provide space for constructive and critical comments in the narrative areas of Theme, Character, Setting, Plot, and Communication, as well as two issues generic to all writing—Convention and Writing Process. These categories differ somewhat from the narrative components above, because, in an effort to make the feedback form as simple as possible, we have consolidated several components. Thus, response to point of view, for example, can be made in the Character space, for an author's selection of viewpoint is integrally tied to character development ("Choosing the first person point of view makes me feel like I know your protagonist. You have been especially good at describing her feelings."). Style and Tone are merged under Communication, which has less to do with *what* an author says than *how* he or she says it ("Your use of alliteration—'greasy, gum-smacking ghoul'—added humor and relieved some of the tension in your Halloween tale."). The Communication space also provides an opportunity for teachers to

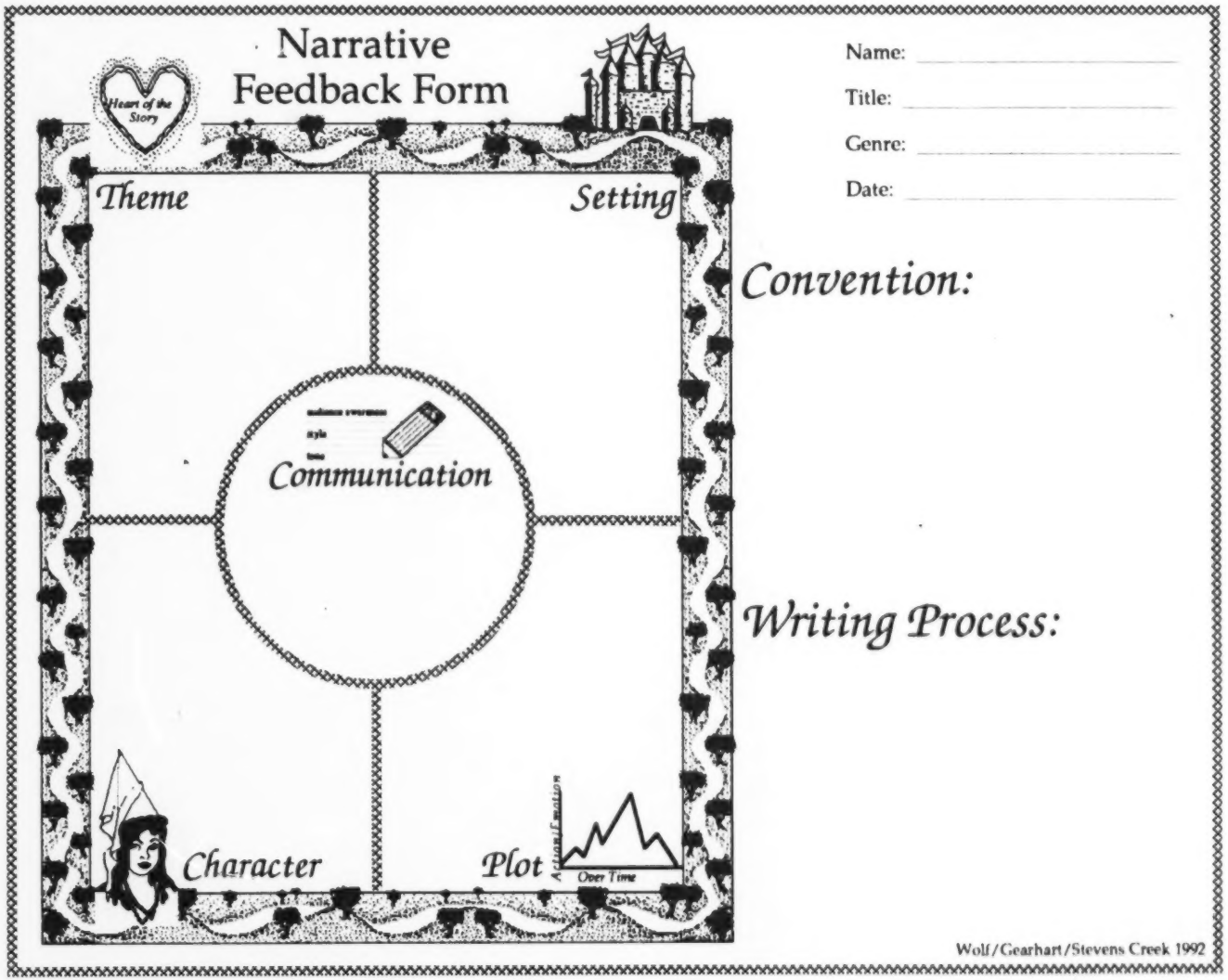

Figure 2. Narrative Feedback Form.

reflect on how effectively the writer is reaching his or her audience. Genre criticism can be made in almost any slot ("I think your setting description is too complicated. In fables, the setting is usually in the background."). The category for Convention gives teachers the necessary opportunity to clarify points of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Finally, the category on Writing Process provides teachers with a forum for reflecting on where a child might get editing help or encouraging a child to work through yet another draft.

In using the form, teachers limit themselves to only two comments—a commendation and a recommendation which they can place in any of the seven categories. The object of the form is not to fill all seven categories with lengthy advice, but instead to choose specific points of criticism to be applied to the child's next draft or piece. Researchers working with Arts Propel (Camp, 1992) came to the same conclusion—urging teachers to comment on "one thing that is done well in the writing, and one thing to focus on in future writing" (p. 66). The choice of category for reflection can be derived from an instructional unit that focuses on a particular narrative component or it can be advice aligned with an individual child's writing needs. We have encouraged our teachers to discuss the points orally with the children during brief writing conferences as well as staple the feedback forms to the writing. The forms then serve as reference points for both child and teacher to see how writing changes over time, in terms of the evolution of a single narrative as well as the student's general development in writing.

Narrative Rubric

In designing a rubric, our goal was to create a classroom tool that could feature the *Writing What You Read* analysis of the multi-leveled dimensions of narrative elements and represent children's growing competencies in narrative writing. Thus we have faced two major challenges to rubric design: (a) capturing the orchestration of narrative elements designed to serve a narrative's purpose and (b) highlighting the iterative nature of children's developing writing as they revise and recycle earlier writing approaches into next steps for writing growth. In the context of these challenges, it is not surprising that, over the course of our efforts, the rubric has undergone several revisions as we have responded to teacher and researcher input and

piloted various versions of the rubric with children's writing. While the present version (see Figure 3) is utilized by the teachers in our study, it is still very much in progress and requires substantiation beyond the positive self-report of teachers.

We have designed five evaluative scales that matched the narrative categories found on the feedback form: Theme, Character, Setting, Plot, and Communication. Each category is headed by horizontal *dual dimensions,* designed to address our first major challenge by emphasizing the dependence of writing on its purpose and the genre selected to achieve that purpose. The second challenge is confronted in the vertical *evaluative scales,* which center on children's development in writing.

The dual dimensions. Because of the complexity of the subgenres of narrative, with varied purposes and processes associated with each, the overarching dual dimensions are designed to summarize some of the critical and distinguishing features of particular genres.

• Theme:	explicit ↔ implicit	didactic ↔ revealing
• Character:	flat ↔ round	static ↔ dynamic
• Setting:	backdrop ↔ essential	simple ↔ multi-functional
• Plot:	simple ↔ complex	static ↔ conflict
• Communication:	context-bound ↔ reader-considerate	literal ↔ symbolic

The dual dimensions are not linear sequences, with the left hand of each dimension being less effective than the right. Instead they are continua whose definitions depend on subgenre choice.[2] The dimensions provide a reminder of the complexity of narrative, and, as we show next, a means for teachers to represent the characteristics of the selected subgenre. Students' writing can then be assessed according to how well the child was able to develop and communicate a story within that subgenre.

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[2] This is not true of the scales developed for Conventions and Writing Process, which represent categories inherent to all writing, not just that of narrative. The dual dimensions for Convention are "invention ↔ convention" and "assumptions ↔ concern," while those for Writing Process are "abitrary ↔ planned" and "one attempt ↔ revision." These dimensions place stronger emphasis on children's developmental progress in writing than on genre-specific expectations. Whether writing a fable, fairy tale, poem, piece of realistic fiction, or exposition, writers will expand their communicative repertoires, their ability to meet conventional expectations, and their willingness to plan and revise to improve their compositions if given careful guidance.

Narrative Rubric

Theme

explicit ◄——► implicit
didactic ◄——► revealing

- Not present or not developed through other narrative elements
- Meaning centered in a series of list-like statements ("I like my mom. And I like my dad. And I like my....") or in the coherence of the action itself ("He blew up the plane. Pow!")
- Beginning statement of theme--often explicit and didactic ("The mean witch chased the children and she shouldn't have done that.")
- Beginning revelation of theme on both explicit and implicit levels through the more subtle things characters say and do ("He put his arm around the dog and held him close.")
- Beginning use of secondary themes, but not often tied to overarching theme; main theme increasingly revealed through discovery rather than delivery ("You can't do that to my sister!", Lou cried, moving to shield Tasha with her body.)
- Overarching theme multi-layered and complex; secondary themes integrally related to primary theme or themes

Character

flat ◄——► round
static ◄——► dynamic

- One or two flat, static characters with little relationship between characters; either objective (action speaks for itself) or first person (author as "I") point of view
- Some rounding, usually in physical description; relationship between characters is action-driven; objective point of view is common
- Continued rounding in physical description, particularly stereotypical features ("wart on the end of her nose"); beginning rounding in feeling, often through straightforward vocabulary ("She was sad, glad, mad.")
- Beginning insights into the motivation and intention that drives the feeling and the action of main characters often through limited omniscient point of view; beginning dynamic features (of change and growth)
- Further rounding (in feeling and motivation); dynamic features appear in the central characters and in the relationships between characters; move to omniscient point of view (getting into the minds of characters)
- Round, dynamic major characters through rich description of affect, intention, and motivation; growth occurs as a result of complex interactions between characters; most characters contribute to the development of the narrative; purposeful choice of point of view

Setting

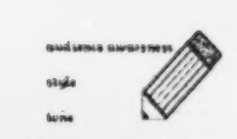
backdrop ◄——► essential
simple ◄——► multi-functional

- Backdrop setting with little or no indication of time and place ("There was a little girl. She liked candy.")
- Skeletal indication of time and place often held in past time ("once there was..."); little relationship to other narrative elements
- Beginning relationship between setting and other narrative elements (futuristic setting to accommodate aliens and spaceships); beginning symbolic functions of setting (often stereotypical images--forest as scary place)
- Setting becomes more essential to the development of the story in explicit ways: characters may remark on the setting or the time and place may be integral to the plot
- Setting may serve more than one function and the relationship between functions is more implicit and symbolic--for example, setting may be linked symbolically to character mood ("She hid in the grass, clutching the sharp, dry spikes, waiting.")
- Setting fully integrated with the characters, action, and theme of the story; role of setting is multifunctional--setting mood, revealing character and conflict, serving as metaphor

Plot

simple ◄——► complex
static ◄——► conflict

- One or two events with little or no conflict ("Once there was a cat. The cat liked milk.")
- Beginning sequence of events, but occasional out-of-sync occurrences; events without problem or problem without resolution
- Single, linear episode with clear beginning, middle, and end. ("Once upon a time there were two friends named Frog and Toad. One sunny day when they were tree climbing, Frog got stuck. He was scared. So Toad helped him down. Toad was a good friend.")
- Plot increases in complexity with more than one episode; episodes contain four critical elements of problem, emotional response, action, outcome; beginning relationship between episodes
- Stronger relationship between episodes (with the resolution in one leading to a problem in the next); beginning manipulation of the sequence through foreshadowing, and subplots
- Overarching problem and resolution supported by multiple, episodes; rich variety of techniques (building suspense, foreshadowing, flashbacks, denouement) to manipulate sequence



Communication

context-bound ◄——► reader-considerate
literal ◄——► symbolic

- Writing bound to context (You have to be there) and often dependent on drawing and talk to clarify the meaning; minimal style and tone
- Beginning awareness of reader considerations; straightforward style and tone focused on getting the information out; first attempts at dialogue begin
- Writer begins to make use of explanations and transitions ("because" and "so"); literal style centers on description ("sunny day"); tone explicit
- Increased information and explanation for the reader (linking ideas as well as episodes); words more carefully selected to suit the narrative's purpose (particularly through increased use of detail in imagery)
- Some experimentation with symbolism (particularly figurative language) which shows reader considerations on both explicit and implicit levels; style shows increasing variety (alliteration, word play, rhythm...etc.) and tone is more implicit
- Careful crafting of choices in story structure as well as vocabulary demonstrate considerate orchestration of all the available resources; judicious experimentation with variety of stylistic forms which are of the symbolic in nature and illuminate the other narrative elements

Wolf/Gearhart/Quellmalz/Whittaker 1992

Figure 3. Narrative Rubric.

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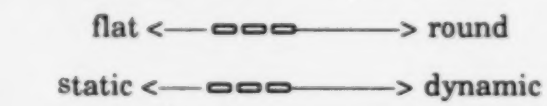
Thus, depending on the subgenre and purpose, Themes move between explicit and sometime didactic statements to implicit revelations. Characters can be flat personalities who remain static and unchanging in a story, or they can come equipped with more rounded physical and emotional description and change over time. The Setting can be a simple cardboard backdrop or it can take on a more essential, multi-functional role. The Plot can also be simple and without tension, or it can evolve in conflict and complexity. Narrative Communication can move between literal and symbolic meanings in style and tone. In addition, narrative communication (as well as poetry, exposition, and other genres) can be bound to context or more aware of audience considerations. Our rubric is generic to narrative and protean in design. It is sufficiently malleable to adjust to individual subgenres of narrative (e.g., folk tale, science fiction), for certain scale points are more applicable to particular subgenres than others.

In using the rubric, teachers shade or mark off a band on the dimensions to indicate the range of typical features of an assigned subgenre and thus to represent their expectations for children's writing within that genre. For example, in a fable the band placed on the double arrows would favor the left side of each dimension, and, indeed, development of the narrative to the right of the shaded band would be inappropriate to the fable subgenre. Thus the marks for Character in a fable might look like this:



While we may believe that the lion saved by the mouse will change his attitude towards rodents, we have no textual confirmation in a fable that this will be the case. The character of the lion is quite appropriately reserved to physical description—he is "big," "strong," with "great paws," while the mouse has the opposite attributes. In some tradebook translations of the tale, however, we may have beginning insights into the mouse's motivation (for she is clever and motivated by survival instincts) as well as into the lion's (for he may smile or chuckle as he listens to the mouse's offer). But detailed description would take the narrative beyond the conventions of a fable. Any author of a fable stays within the simpler range of scale points, for a fable contains an explicit and

often didactic theme, with little indication of time and place, often contained in a single, linear episode. Although the fable as a whole is emblematic of rules for behavior, the language within the short text is more literal than symbolic.

As the teacher provides instruction in fables, she or he would discuss the typicality of flat and static characters within the subgenre, but also indicate the range of possibilities within that general tendency. Depending on their developing competencies in the subgenre, children could position their writing within that range; a less experienced writer may lean toward very flat, static characters, focusing on the action between the characters, while a more experienced author might move—within the conventions of fables—toward more round and dynamic features, addressing the motivations and intentions behind the actions.

The evaluative scales. Within each category we developed a six-level evaluative scale designed to match generalized understandings of children's writing development (Dyson & Freedman, 1991) with what the teachers knew about their own students' writing. Choosing the number of levels and the descriptors for those levels was difficult, but like Hiebert (1991) we believed that "for classroom purposes, schemes that focus on specific dimensions are more helpful" (p. 514). We opted for six because writing development is complex enough to merit a sufficiently differentiated portrait. We eliminated numerical scores at each level to discourage unproductive focus on the meaning of a "4" or a "2" or a "5." We wanted to avoid placing more emphasis on a child's rank than on his or her achievement within a particular context.

The six-level scales work in tandem with the dimensions. For students' written fables, analytic scale points in Character could shift between the second and fourth points, depending on the direct or more subtle hints the writer offers about character. Younger writers may focus more on the action between the characters, while older writers may provide initial insights into the intentions behind the action.

The evaluative scales allow for much movement between levels depending on the child, his or her purpose in writing, and the genre selected to meet that purpose. As Dyson (1989) suggests, "the key to writing development thus is not what is written on the page but what the child is trying to accomplish in the world beyond the page" (p. 265). Children's writing emerges in complexity as

they condense interpretive instruction, peer discussion, and literary and life experiences into words in black and white. What is perhaps a serendipitous experiment (such as play with stylistic possibilities) may later become an artful choice. As children learn to orchestrate developing competencies across elements, they will move up and down the scales, returning to earlier understandings and extending and building upon these experiences to grow as young authors.

Thus, while our analytic rubric contains scales for differentiated narrative elements, the *use* of the rubric is designed to highlight the critical nature of *orchestration* in the writing process. Successful writing is not dependent on pre-cast criteria, or the simplicity or complexity of individual components; the components must work together within the genre frame and the writer's individual choices. If we say that all stories should involve complex character development, then the boy who cried wolf would once again defy the status quo. If we intimate that every story should tie setting to symbol, then we must disregard the effectiveness of *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972). And if we suggest that all themes should only be stated implicitly, then we must discount Charlotte's final words about friendship (White, 1952). It is in the orchestration of narrative components and in the interplay of authorial choices that a text succeeds, not in isolated rules and regulations.

Still, an analytic response to narrative elements can be helpful when the writing is not as successful as it could be. If a child writes a piece of realistic fiction with little or no conflict, underdeveloped characters, and no theme, there is certainly room for explicit guidance to lead the child toward more effective writing, and a helpful 'next step' might indeed be a focus on enhancing the narrative's treatment of just one of the elements. Even mature, successful writers could look to the rubric to assess their stories and see possibilities for further development.

Illustrative assessment of students' narratives. We now turn to two examples of student writing. The first is the result of a first-grade unit on friendship which highlighted the stories of Frog and Toad by Arnold Lobel (1971, 1979). Concerned that her students often wrote adventure after adventure with little or no conclusion, the teacher asked the children to write an original tale "where Toad would get into a sticky situation and Frog would bail him out," encouraging her students to include "some sort of resolution"

(March 30, 1992). She also asked her students to concentrate on the unit's theme of friendship. One student, Ted, wrote the following in his first draft:

> Frog and Toad and snake there in a foroost. They get bit by a snake friendship.

Ted's first attempt contained many elements of a story with characters, setting, and some conflict in plot, though still no resolution. He reduced the theme of friendship to either a one word appendage or to the name of a snake whose appellation did not prevent him from some fairly vicious activity. On the rubric, Ted's story would be matched with the first level of all the categories, with the possible exception of plot which could be given a second level rating. When the teacher conferenced with Ted about his draft, she returned to her original instructional emphasis on plot development, explaining that, after one is bitten by a snake, something's bound to happen. She was concerned about Frog's and Toad's recovery and asked Ted to provide a resolution. She also asked him to think about the message of his story—what was he trying to say about friendship?

When Ted went back to the drawing board, he wrote a more substantial text, fleshing out the plot to add more coherence, the outward sign of an emotional response, and a resolution. His teacher edited it for spelling and punctuation, and he then rewrote it to achieve the following final draft:

> Once upon a time Frog and Toad went to the zoo. Toad went to see the snakes, and got bit by a snake. Toad cried and Frog came over and Frog got bit by a snake too. They both went to the hospital. Then they got better and they never went to the zoo again.

When we analyzed Ted's story according to the rubric, we were still hard put to see the theme of friendship. Although Toad and Frog go from zoo, to hospital, to recuperation together, there is no indication in the story that they are good buddies. Still, Lobel himself establishes the theme of friendship between Frog and Toad through the build-up of multiple stories, not a single isolated experience, so Ted's piece could contribute to that set of friendly adventures. In lieu of friendship, Ted's thematic emphasis seems to be on the dangers of snakes and the lesson learned by the two characters who "never went to the zoo

again." The explicit and more didactic focus places Ted's story between the second and third levels of the rubric's thematic scale.

Ted's character development is now at the second level. The relationship between the characters is action driven (for when Toad cries Frog responds, though we don't know whether friendship or curiosity is behind his response), and it is told from an objective point of view. The setting is also at the second level—the zoo provides the snakes necessary to carry the story. Ted's plot is now at the third level—substantially improved from his first draft. He now has a single, clear episode with a beginning, middle, and end. Finally, Ted's communication is at the second level. Although his text has no dialogue, his straightforward style and tone focus on getting the information out. In Ted's story "things happen" to Frog and Toad over which they have little control or even emotional response beyond a few tears. But the organization makes the episode clear, and shows Ted's increasing understanding of what he must do as a writer to communicate his story.

Our second example is a piece of realistic fiction from Elena, a sixth-grade girl. Elena's teacher had also placed strong emphasis on plot development, asking her students to think of a problem that may take multiple solution attempts before coming to final resolution. When Elena began her story with a character web of her protagonist "Veronica Stapels," she provided notes on Veronica's carefree life on a ranch, riding horses in her spare time, "baking goodies," and dreaming about "winning the country dance contest for $1,000" and the heart of the "handsome Gary Richards" to boot. But the section in her web subtitled "Problem" was left blank.

After a talk with her discussion partner which focused on this missing plot element, Elena determined to use the country dance prize as a partial resolution to a character problem. She decided that Veronica's lighthearted life was about to come to an end—her father was $2,500 in debt and was going to lose the ranch to the landlord if he didn't pay up within two weeks. Elena thus provided her protagonist with more altruistic motivation for winning the dance contest—helping her father and family, rather than striving for personal glorification or romance. Instead of focusing on Veronica's beauty, popularity, or deft dance steps, Elena foreshadowed her story's final resolution by providing a character description that emphasized Veronica's generous spirit. The introduction to her story's final draft follows:

Veronica loves where she lives. She lives in a beautiful ranch home in Ranch Valley, California. Everyone compliments her on her warm kindness to everybody. Veronica also is gentle and caring to any animal, especially her horse, Chestnut.

On a bright sunny day, when the whole Stapelton family was having breakfast, Mr. Canaby came by knocking on the front door. Mr. Canaby is a western kind of guy with knee-high boots, cowboy hat, and bandana. He's also tall and tough. He's been bugging Daddy about him not paying the bills for 6 months. Daddy keeps on telling him that his job was paying 40% less than what he is normally paid because of the recession. Mr. Canaby always bugs us about the same thing over and over again. But today was different. Mr. Canaby explained that if Daddy doesn't pay $2,500 by next week, he'll take the entire house away from us. My family just sat there, stunned. We couldn't possibly come up with $2,500 in one week! Mr. Canaby didn't say a word and he left. I was thinking of how terrible it would be if we lost the ranch.

Oh! I just thought of something that could save the ranch! I remembered about a poster posted on the tree in front of Ms. Jane's house. It was a poster about a country dance contest awarding $2,000 for the 1st place winner . . .

Elena's story falls within the genre of formula fiction (e.g., the Nancy Drew series), where stereotypically beautiful heroines, known for their "warm kindness" and clever abilities, consistently save the day. Though times may be hard for a while and the antagonist "tall and tough," the protagonist will dance her way to a positive resolution.

In our assessment, we found Elena's story to be consistent with the fourth level of the evaluative scales across elements. Her *theme* was still relatively explicit, though there was some beginning experimentation into implicit revelations. For example, in her notes she stated that she wanted Veronica to learn "that she can't win all the time, but she can practice more and more to get better," but in the conclusion of the piece she developed this theme through intimation rather than direct statement. Through the use of the first person point of view, Elena provided us with some beginning insights into her main *character*'s motivation ("I was thinking of how terrible it would be . . .").

Although the character of Veronica underwent changes and growth from notes to final draft, her consistency within the final draft is typical of the genre. The western setting and the imminent loss of the ranch are integral to the *plot* of the story, which contained several sequential episodes. With regard to *communication*, Elena provided us with sufficient information to follow the story line as well as increased detail in imagery.

Elena's story is a successful instantiation of formula fiction. Although some critics decry these series books as the work of "fiction factories" (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987, p. 124), many readers (particularly those of Elena's age) find comfort in the romantic characters and predictable plots. When Elena reflected on her own writing she wrote of her fascination with her protagonist: "I would love to be her. I like everything she likes." She also commented on the "fun" of developing solution attempts and an outcome—a far cry from her first notes which left the area blank. If we confine our commendations and recommendations to these two areas of character and plot, we can certainly congratulate Elena on her effective translation of the genre. But as we analyze these two areas, we might ask Elena to incorporate more of her own development of the character into her final draft. For example, Veronica might be a more interesting character if she moved from self-interest to concern for others within the story itself. We also might explain that the abrupt shift in point of view between the first and second paragraphs ("she" to "I") causes some confusion for the reader. In terms of plot, Elena ended her story with Veronica coming in second place. The prize accorded was $1,500, not enough to fully repay the landlord. But, Elena's story explains the "in the meantime" her mother had managed to save the other $1000 necessary to make the payment. Although this kind of "deus ex machina" is prominent in formula fiction, it seems a bit contrived, and Elena's story would benefit from a more probable ending.

Conclusions

Our paper has focused on our efforts to design assessment practices that teachers can use to guide the growth of young writers. Viewing writing assessment as a reader's interpretive response to a child's communicative efforts, we have highlighted the dialogic nature of criticism. Viewing writing assessment as analytic response to text, we have explored relationships

between analysis of literature and assessment of children's writing. Thus we are working within a framework that integrates reading with writing, teaching with assessing.

We believe that assessment dialogues play critical roles in children's growing understandings of text and in children's growing competencies with the composing of text. Although we began with methods for the assessment of narrative, we do not see our approach as restricted to narrative. We agree with McGinley and Kamberelis (1992) that "the activity of 'making meaning' through written language offers powerful possibilities for personal, social, and political understanding and transformation" (p. 410). Children must make their individual meanings through a diversity of genre, but they will be better served if they are provided with explicit and informative guidance in how to make their meaning clearer and more engaging to the reader. Inclusion of—but not restriction to—a focus on the components of genre will be helpful.

We do worry that our readers will miss our concern for meaning making in the analytic nature of our work, with its charts, forms, and rubrics. We wonder as well if our concern for the child's role in her own composing will be missed in our emphasis on teachers and staff development. While we share the goal of distributed expertise, of engaging children in productive and helpful criticism of their work, we believe the emergence of such classroom communities depends on the content knowledge of teachers (Shulman, 1986). Thus we must address first what teachers need to know. Knowledge of the nature of narrative and approaches to literacy instruction cannot be captured with charts and forms, ours or any others, but concise representations can be helpful. The trick is to emphasize their limitations. Our own analytic interpretations, for example, are highly dependent on mainstream Euro-American narrative structure with its emphasis on action in a sequence (McCabe, 1992). Whether in our workshops with teachers or in our presentations to professional audiences, we present our assessment artifacts not as "answers" but as possibilities for interpreting and responding to students' writing. We hope that teachers will adapt them as appropriate to their students and their writing.

Our "next steps" are intended to shift the focus from development of the analytic *Writing What You Read* framework toward its usefulness in classroom practice. Current development work is focusing on the design of

classroom contexts that can support assessment dialogues—teacher-student conferencing, peer response, self-assessment, and parent-student conferencing. Having grown in their understandings of narrative and its development, our teachers are eager to explore ways to share their knowledge with their students. Ongoing implementation research is documenting the pathways to growth in teachers' understandings of writing genre and writing development, and the ways in which teachers are learning use their growing knowledge in the design of curriculum and in their instruction and assessment interactions with students.

Our work may have import for the design of large-scale assessment. First, in its close articulation with a curriculum framework, our rubric offers an alternative to holistic or primary trait rubrics. Should our research demonstrate that teachers can use assessments derived from our rubric in ways that are helpful to their students' growth as story writers, our findings would support the importance of grounding a rubric's design in current conceptions of valued outcomes. Second, our studies of teachers' growth may provide valuable insight into the kinds of content knowledge teachers need in order to utilize the results of well-motivated assessments effectively. Third, a planned study of the "scorability" of children's narratives will directly inform the potential of the rubric for large-scale assessment of writing samples. Using the rubric with numbered (instead of unlabeled) levels, teachers from both our and other sites will rate narratives, and we will document the moderation process as well as patterns of agreement and disagreement in teachers' judgments.

In her Newbery acceptance speech for *Jacob Have I Loved*, Katherine Paterson (1986a) explained, "Those who know me best will testify that I am far more of a reader than I am a writer" (pp. 76-77). Odd words for a prolific writer who has produced some of the most highly acclaimed children's literature of our time. Yet, her testimony matches that of many authors, who claim to be readers first and foremost. In reflecting on her own writing, Natalie Babbit (1987) acknowledged her debt to Joseph Campbell. Virginia Hamilton (1987) was influenced by the sociological writing of W.E.B. Du Bois and Shirley Graham. E.B. White (1977) tipped his hat to Thoreau, while Katherine Paterson (1986b) gave more than a substantial nod to Frances Hodgson Burnett. Professional writers often pay tribute to exemplars of the

craft both as fonts of inspiration and as sources of critical analysis. Authors read widely and analyze what they read, allowing these reflections to help shape their own writing. So it is, or at least can be, with children, for in this article, we have tried to follow the admonitions and advice of illustrious authors, assuming that the careful analysis of literary text can lead to better writing. As teachers and children learn to write what they read through analytic dialogue, assessment becomes a learning event—an opportunity to examine current understandings and make decisions for future growth.

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